



**West
Yorkshire
Policing
& Crime**

**Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire**



**Alison Lowe
Deputy Mayor for
Policing & Crime**

Item 7

Report to: Police and Crime Panel

Date: 01 March 2024

Subject: **Drugs and Substance Misuse Update**

Report of: Alison Lowe, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime

Author: Policing and Crime Team, West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The aim of this report is to examine the relationship between offending and substance misuse (drugs and alcohol) as well as looking at the relevant areas of drug related offending within West Yorkshire. The work of West Yorkshire Police, and the partnership approach to reducing drug and alcohol dependencies within our communities will also be covered.

2. BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Police and Crime Plan 2021 to 2024 outlines that substance abuse is often linked to serious violent crime, acquisitive crime (theft, burglary) and anti-social behaviour (ASB). West Yorkshire Police (WYP) have identified early intervention and substance abuse treatment as pathways to reduce crime and protect our communities. For partners in Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and public health services, long-term users of drugs and alcohol represent some of the most vulnerable members of our communities.
- 2.2. Offending linked to alcohol or drugs can be divided into two categories:
- Offences committed by an individual whilst under the influence of drugs or alcohol e.g. assaults, driving over the prescribed limit or public order offences.
 - Crimes committed to support substance dependency, for example shoplifting or burglary.
- 2.3. Beyond these classifications, the operation of the drugs marketplace promotes Serious and Organised Crime (SOC), which can be linked to incidents of serious violence, exploitation of individuals through modern slavery, and the criminal exploitation of children.
- 2.4. As a major metropolitan area, the rate of drug offences recorded in West Yorkshire

is a little above the England and Wales average (3.7 per 1,000 residents; figure is 3.0 nationally¹). Compared to similar police force areas, West Yorkshire's figures are in line with South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, and below those recorded in Greater Manchester and Merseyside.

3. RECORDED OFFENCES in 2023

- 3.1. During 2023, WYP recorded 8,707 drug offences – an increase on the previous year, but consistent with the number of offences recorded during the past four years.
- 3.2. Whilst drug possession offence figures have remained static, increases in production, supply, and possession with intent to supply (PWIT) offences have been noted.

Year	Total offences	Production	Possession	Supply	PWITS	Other
2019	7288	787	5183	431	870	17
2020	8531	953	6375	193	982	28
2021	8114	1037	5959	204	891	23
2022	8364	876	6346	217	916	9
2023	8707	934	6341	287	1111	34

- 3.3. Three quarters (74%) of all drugs offences relate to Class B drugs and 23% to Class A drugs. Drug offences across West Yorkshire districts increased slightly, although Bradford had a reduction in offences.
- 3.4. Cannabis remains the most prevalent drug across the Force (69% of all drug offences). Cocaine accounts for 17% of all drug offences, which is an increase compared with the previous year. Crack Cocaine and Heroin account for 4% and 3% respectively.
- 3.5. There has been an increase in the number of Cannabis production offences ('cannabis farms') in the year to November 2023 following a reduction in the previous year. Most 'grows' were in Leeds and Bradford. Over 40% of suspects linked to Cannabis grows are foreign nationals.
- 3.6. There has been a slight reduction in offences linked to recreational drugs (MDMA, LSD, Ketamine, Amphetamine) in the last year. However, as highlighted above, Cocaine related offences have increased.
- 3.7. Cannabis infused edibles (such as sweets, chocolate, cakes, crisps, and drinks that are infused with THC, the psychoactive part of Cannabis), are a Class B drug. 31 offences were recorded in the last year (November 2022-October 2023), which remains consistent with the previous year. Cannabis edibles are available to purchase online via social media and there are videos on popular apps such as TikTok which show the viewer how to make edibles themselves. Their presence on social media, coupled with bright packaging and the adaptation of popular brand names, makes them

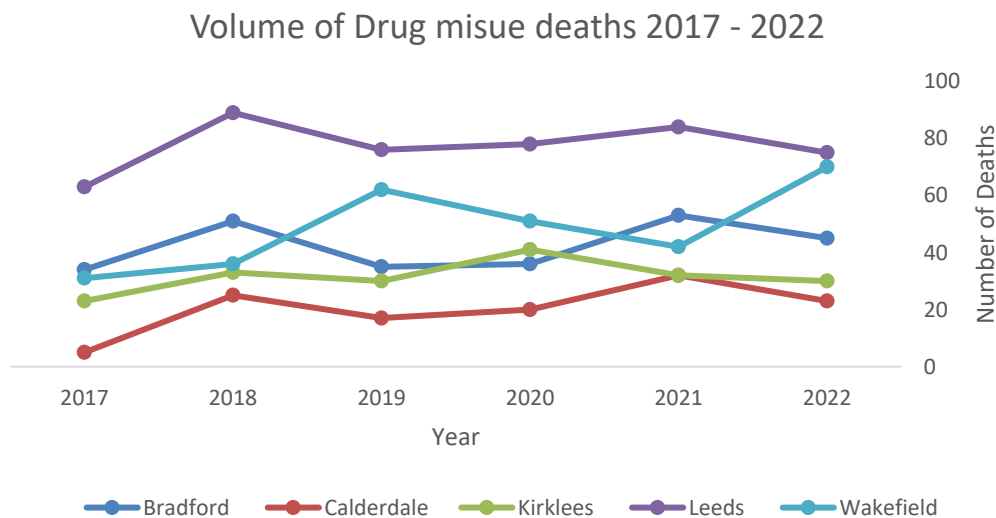
¹ ONS recorded crime data, year to September 2023.

particularly popular amongst young people.

- 3.8. There were 1,694 ‘Fast Parcel’ (parcel courier delivery service) seizures recorded in the last year, which is a large increase on the previous year. The USA is the most frequent country of origin, and Cannabis is the most frequent commodity imported.

4. DRUG RELATED DEATHS

- 4.1. Drug misuse deaths include any deaths where the underlying cause is drug abuse or drug dependence. Drug-related deaths are at an all-time high nationally. ONS (Office of National Statistics) figures for England show an increase in drug poisoning deaths. The below chart details West Yorkshire deaths between 2017 – 2022.



5. DRUG TESTING IN POLICE CUSTODY

- 5.1. Of the 4,548 people arrested in December 2023, 1,199 persons (26.4%) stated they were alcohol or drug dependent. Testing for drug use can be an important step in understanding the underlying factors influencing an individual’s offending, with the potential to direct people to drug or alcohol treatment services as part of a package to reduce re-offending.
- 5.2. The Mayor’s Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) funding also supports the dedicated testing of those arrested for offences likely to be linked to Class A substance misuse through the Test on Arrest / custody-based Drug Intervention Programme. These are offences broadly linked to acquisitive crime, such as burglary, theft of/from a motor vehicle, and theft and robbery. These ‘trigger offences’ lead to the option of a drugs test, but for other offences where there is a suspicion that drug use may be a factor, police officers are able to test after gaining senior authorisation through ‘Inspector Authority’. These other offences include serious sexual offences and cases of domestic abuse. The link between drug use and domestic abuse has been explored by partners in Calderdale, and this is a topic we are looking to develop further through the WY Strategic Combating Drugs Board. [see Section 9]

- 5.3. A positive test result allows a number of treatment options to be considered to support individuals out of the cycle of drug related offending. DIP funding represents a major investment by the Mayor, with £1.3m allocated to WYP drug testing on arrest or in custody settings in 2024/25.

Drug Testing on Arrest Figures December 2022 – December 2023

District	Custody Suite	Arrests	Drug Tests	Positive	% Positive
BD	TRAFALGAR	13260	1422	708	49.8%
CD	HALIFAX	5437	816	488	59.8%
KD	HUDDERSFIELD	7460	885	511	57.7%
LD	ELLAND ROAD	15128	1890	1055	55.8%
WD	HAVERTOP	9601	1447	943	65.2%
Force Total		50886	6460	3705	57.4%

- 5.4. Over the last 12 months the number of drug tests completed in WYP custody suites has steadily increased. There have been 442 more tests than in 2022, which is a 5.7 % increase.
- 5.5. The below table shows the numbers of tests split between ‘Trigger’ and ‘Inspector Authority’ tests. Although a small proportion of the total number of tests, Inspector Authority tests do identify a similar degree of drug use outside the usual trigger offences.

District	Custody Suite	Total arrests in last 12 months	- of which for Trigger offences	% Trigger offences	Number drug tested	% tested	Positive	% positive	Negative	% negative	Disputed Positive	Refused	Unknown
BD	BD CUSTODY TRAFALGAR	13260	3129	24%	1422	45.40%	708	49.80%	667	46.90%	42	5	0
CD	CD CUSTODY HALIFAX	5437	1329	24%	816	61.40%	488	59.80%	287	35.20%	26	15	0
KD	KD CUSTODY HUDDERSFIELD	7460	1721	23%	885	51.40%	511	57.70%	348	39.30%	11	13	2
LD	LD CUSTODY ELLAND ROAD	15128	4032	27%	1890	46.90%	1055	55.80%	735	38.90%	29	69	2
WD	WD CUSTODY HAVERTOP	9601	2568	27%	1447	56.30%	943	65.20%	450	31.10%	36	17	1
Force Total		50886	12779	25%	6460	50.60%	3705	57.40%	2487	38.50%	144	119	5

District	Custody Suite	Total arrests in last 12 months	- of which for non Trigger offences	% non trigger	Number drug tested	% tested (Insp Auth)	Positive	% positive	Negative	% negative	Disputed Positive	Refused	Unknown
BD	BD CUSTODY TRAFALGAR	13260	10131	76%	252	2.50%	147	58.30%	95	37.70%	5	5	0
CD	CD CUSTODY HALIFAX	5437	4108	76%	239	5.80%	147	61.50%	84	35.10%	4	2	2
KD	KD CUSTODY HUDDERSFIELD	7460	5739	77%	173	3.00%	103	59.50%	65	37.60%	3	2	0
LD	LD CUSTODY ELLAND ROAD	15128	11096	73%	865	7.80%	487	56.30%	340	39.30%	5	32	1
WD	WD CUSTODY HAVERTOP	9601	7033	73%	219	3.10%	149	68.00%	65	29.70%	3	2	0
Force Total		50886	38107	75%	1748	4.60%	1033	59.10%	649	37.10%	20	43	3

6. DRUG TREATMENT REFERRALS (12 MONTHS TO OCTOBER 2023)

- 6.1. During the period 01/08/2022 to 30/09/2023 there were 4,106 appointments for a

Drug Treatment Service Provider made in custody prior to release. Of those, 1,883 (45.9%) were completed and 1,946 people failed to attend. Failure to attend does not necessarily mean that an individual has failed to engage with a treatment programme. Commonly, people are already engaged in a treatment process and do not need the appointment, although based on December 2023's data, 35% of those failing to attend were then referred back to the police for a breach of the conditions of their release. Feedback from national police forums suggest the referral issues experienced in West Yorkshire are experienced by others in equal measure.

Initial Assessment	Bradford	Calderdale	Kirklees	Leeds	Wakefield	Force
Total	772	425	507	1527	875	4106
Completed	333	286	287	621	356	1883
Failed to attend	375	96	196	767	512	1946
Carried Forward	64	35	24	129	7	259

Note: This data collection is in a trial period. Not all service providers are able to provide a full breakdown of outcomes at present, and so column totals may not add up exactly.

7. POLICE AND PARTNER RESPONSES TO SUBSTANCE MISUSE

7.1. **Neighbourhood Police Teams**

- 7.2. Neighbourhood Police Teams (NPTs) continue to play a vital role in terms of public facing, community policing. Awareness material and training is continuously directed to these teams to ensure they are reminded of the role they also play in tackling SOC and specifically drugs.
- 7.3. NPTs are often the key resource in uncovering cannabis farms and therefore play a vital role in responding to cannabis (which makes up approximately 75% of all drug offences) as a SOC threat. Cannabis farms represent a significant threat and require investment of resources to manage and destroy the scene.
- 7.4. The Force Drugs Coordinator provides an input to the local Landlord Association every year to raise awareness of the dangers of letting properties to people who may cultivate cannabis. Some of the key dangers include fires (due to poor and dangerous electrical wiring), destruction of the property (as many farmers will cut through floors and walls to make space for ventilation points), wiring and irrigation, and reputational damage to the local area. We also highlight the prominence of vulnerable, trafficked people used to manage the farms.

7.5. **Integrated Offender Management (IOM)**

- 7.6. IOM Teams are embedded into NPTs across the force and focus on the offenders that cause the most impact to communities.
- 7.7. Both IOM and OM teams engage with offenders to identify their triggers to offending (such as drug or alcohol misuse) and provide referrals and pathways to agencies who support and guide offenders towards the removal of such triggers.
- 7.8. IOM teams have strong links to the drug test service providers and will also refer offenders to voluntary and funded agencies who support offenders to manage their addictions.
- 7.9. The IOM Police Team have officers embedded within the five main prisons in West Yorkshire, working to bridge the gap between custody and release into the community.
- 7.10. The Prison HUB officers work closely with the district offender management teams and external partners to ensure support is in place for prison leavers, including drug and alcohol referrals for when the offenders are released back into the community.
- 7.11. They also regularly obtain funding to run courses with managed offenders to promote rehabilitation and resettlement in preparation for release. This includes having a female officer based at HMP New Hall providing gender and trauma informed interventions for female offenders. Police and partners work closely together in this arena to offer a bespoke intervention service to women over the age of 18 years. Various support services are offered with a strong focus on alcohol and drug intervention.

7.12. **Liaison and Diversion (L&D)**

- 7.13. The L&D service improves the health and criminal justice outcomes of adults and children in the justice system with complex needs linked to their offending behaviour. This includes alcohol and drug addiction, learning disabilities and mental ill health. West Yorkshire has a single L&D provider, which was commissioned from April 2019 and is now fully embedded.
- 7.14. The overarching objective of L&D services is to support people through the initial contact with the criminal system and refer them for appropriate health or social care support, or enable them to be diverted away from the criminal justice system into a more appropriate setting.
- 7.15. L&D services are now available in all custody suites to support detainees with their specific health and wellbeing needs, particularly around the use of drugs and alcohol. Previously this service was confined to custody, but from quarter 1 of 2024/25 it will also be offered to those attending for a Voluntary Interview, when an automatic referral will be made to L&D for all vulnerable adults and children. L&D will then conduct an assessment and offer tailored support.

7.16. **A&E Navigator Programme – WY Violence Reduction Partnership**

- 7.17. The A&E Navigator Programme is a flagship of the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP), which has funded the service since 2021. From involvement in knife crime or assault with a weapon, to drugs, gangs, and exploitation, it allows professionals to intervene at the earliest opportunity by placing trained youth workers within the emergency departments of hospitals.
- 7.18. It reaches those in crisis at the ‘teachable’ moment. Building trusting relationships and developing tailored plans, the Navigators help those with violence-related injuries to access support services. People engaging with the programme commonly experience more than one issue, and those can include alcohol misuse, drug misuse, and violence.
- 7.19. The service extends beyond hospital walls with regular aftercare appointments when patients return to their communities. The programme’s success has led to the UK’s first ‘Accident & Emergency Navigators’ conference, which took place in Leeds in May 2023, uniting more than 140 representatives of services and organisations which support victims of serious youth violence.

8. EMERGING THREATS IN DRUG SUPPLY AND OFFENDING

8.1. **Drug Supply**

- 8.2. The drugs market has largely returned to normal since Covid 19. Legalisation of Cannabis in other parts of the world means these markets are more mature and can offer a wider variety of ‘products’. With the growth of online purchasing, these are more easily available than before.
- 8.3. Knowledge on growing higher potency cannabis plants is also more easily available than ever online. Organised Crime Groups (OCGs), who produce most of the street marijuana, are learning and developing systems that encourage bigger, better grows more consistently.

- 8.4. There has been significant disruption to the heroin market, with the intelligence that the Taliban are banning the growth of the opium poppy. Afghanistan has been the primary supplier of heroin to the drugs market. The impact of these restrictions is still unknown. However, it is expected that there will be competition from rival suppliers to fill the market with their products.
- 8.5. Linked to the uncertainty around heroin purity and supply is the concern that we may see an increase in synthetic opioids (e.g. 'nitazenes') entering the marketplace. These substances are highly potent and are allegedly ten times stronger than fentanyl, and up to one hundred times stronger than morphine. These synthetic drugs are usually adulterated with heroin to create the illusion that that heroin is still of good quality. The synthetic market has been attributed to the increase in drug related deaths as users are not aware of the potency of what they are taking.
- 8.6. Meanwhile, 'Spice' continues to be the drug of choice in prisons in West Yorkshire and nationwide.
- 8.7. **County Lines**
- 8.8. County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing area within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines. They are likely to exploit children, young people, and vulnerable adults to move and store drugs and money using coercion, intimidation, violence, and sexual violence.
- 8.9. **Exploitation of Vulnerable Adults**
- 8.10. OCGs continue to exploit and target our communities' most vulnerable adults to aid in drug supply. Generally, these individuals are drug users themselves and are exploited through the promise of drugs as payment for their properties being used to store drugs. 'Cuckooing' is a term used to describe a property that has been taken over for the purpose of using it in criminal activity, such as storing/dealing drugs or storing firearms.
- 8.11. Cuckooed addresses are often a feature in the county lines model of drug dealing. Operation Cuckoo is a Force initiative to increase and develop intelligence sharing between Police and partners to identify those people in locations most at risk. Increased flagging and local tasking enable districts to continue to combat this crime type.
- 8.12. The topic of cuckooing is frequently reviewed through the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime's (DMPC) modern slavery forum; the West Yorkshire Anti-Slavery Partnership. Recent feedback from partners in Leeds and Calderdale have highlighted that successful strategies have been developed to tackle what is a complex problem for police and housing services to address.

8.13. **Fast Parcels**

8.14. Dame Carol Black’s 2020 review of drugs highlighted that:

“There has been a significant increase in the use of post and parcel services to traffic drugs across the EU, often linked to web-enabled transactions. Prescribed medicines such as synthetic opioids and drugs available in pill form like ecstasy are often delivered via post and fast parcel. The overall volume of legitimate parcel traffic has increased significantly over recent years, making it increasingly difficult for law enforcement agencies to detect and intercept all but a fraction of suspicious packages.”

8.15. Criminals are also thought to be exploiting the delivery network to supply significant amounts of drugs while avoiding detection. WYP recently identified a sophisticated network of individuals importing amounts of cannabis from Canada to student addresses in Leeds. This network was routinely exploiting students to facilitate numerous imports while mitigating the risk to themselves by not needing to give their own details.

8.16. It is suspected that the use of online purchasing of drugs will continue to grow in popularity, it offers a wider selection of products that can be purchased and the risk to importers is reduced, for example by delivering parcels to fake addresses, collections points or exploited persons.

9. **COMBATING DRUGS PARTNERSHIPS**

9.1. The Government’s 10-year strategy for drugs, ‘From Harm to Hope’ was published in December 2021. A key tenet of the strategy has been the establishment of a nationwide network of ‘Combating Drugs Partnerships’ (CDP) across local authority district areas. West Yorkshire’s five CDPs sit under a West Yorkshire Strategic Combating Drugs Board, chaired by the DMPC.

9.2. CDPs represent a multi-agency platform for understanding and addressing drug-related harm, and are comprised of local authority public health representatives, alongside police, drug treatment, probation, and liaison and diversion service providers. Together, these agencies can take a holistic view of the issue of substance misuse in their area, and work to devise a strong partnership response. An example is CDPs’ recent work to design drug treatment projects and community interventions using the DHSC’s ‘Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant’ (SSMTRG). Other work has included investment in drug testing and information services. In Wakefield (a recipient of the government’s Project ADDER funding), important investments have been made in a drug alert system (LDIS), and drug-related death system (QES). LDIS provides the capacity for partners to alert agencies (and substance users) of a dangerous, adulterated drugs’ presence in the local marketplace, whilst QES will enhance shared learning from cases of drug or alcohol-related deaths.

9.3. At West Yorkshire level, partners engaged with the Strategic Board are looking to explore means of directing more people to drug or alcohol treatment programmes after a court appearance (following the court’s issuing of a Drug Rehabilitation Requirement [DRR] or Alcohol Treatment Requirement [ATR]), or following the police’s issuing of an Out of Court Disposal, with the aim of addressing the substance misuse which may be driving the offending behaviour.

- 9.4. One important aspect of the West Yorkshire Strategic Board’s work has been to promote the use of the opiate overdose medication, Naloxone.

10. NALOXONE

- 10.1. Naloxone is a medication that counters the effects of Heroin and other opioids by reversing respiratory depression caused by these drugs. Nationally, police services are adopting Naloxone to be carried by trained officers and deployed in cases of drug overdose where an individual is seen to be unresponsive. Naloxone works by competing with opioids for a space on the opioid receptors in the brain, and so reverses the effects of the drug. Naloxone is not a replacement for medical help, and after administration, the person will still need professional medical help as the naloxone effects are temporary.
- 10.2. In January 2024, West Yorkshire Police agreed to run a short pilot project for Naloxone use in two West Yorkshire district areas, with the objective of extending the provision across all districts subject to a successful trial. This project has been many months in the making, and we are grateful for WYP’s support of the programme thus far.

11. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

- 11.1. WYP and the Combined Authority understand the link between addiction and offending and continues to work with partners and offenders to provide the support individuals need to make positive changes to their lives. The force will continue to identify and target those groups or individuals who seek to harm our communities through drug supply on a local, Force, and regional level through dedicated and collaborative law enforcement responses.
- 11.2. The current international context of drug supply presents serious challenges through the potential for highly dangerous synthetic opioids entering the UK drugs market. However, the police and health service partners’ investment in local CDPs has developed our districts’ capacity to respond to this threat.
- 11.3. Recent major investments in local drug treatment service capacity offers pathways for drug and alcohol users to disengage from substance misuse, and potentially reduce reoffending. Close partnership collaboration, and the adoption of Naloxone by WYP, is helping West Yorkshire to develop the resources needed to reduce the tragic loss of life through drug and alcohol related deaths.

12. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION BENEFITS AND IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. Evolving partner work on the links between drug use and domestic abuse is set to be a development topic in the year ahead. There is a gender dimension to substance misuse, where the victims of drug overdoses are more likely to be male. Female drug related offending can be a symptom of other complex vulnerabilities.

13. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. Funding contributions the West Yorkshire Drug Intervention Programme are made from the Community Safety Fund as in previous years.

14. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. None.

15. EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

- 15.1. Not applicable

16. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 16.1. That the panel note this report and the opportunity to support the work of the Combating Drugs Partnerships hosted within district Local Authority teams.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact Officer:	Neil Flenley, Policy Manager
E-mail:	neil.flenley@westyorks-ca.gov.uk